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Gun rights advocates bear arms to thank Ranson City

Council members

By **DAVE McMILLION**

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RANSON, W.Va. — At least four people carried exposed handguns into a Ranson City Council meeting Tuesday night when a group of gun rights advocates showed up to thank council members for dropping a proposed law that would prohibit guns at city recreation areas.

At least one other member of the group was carrying a concealed gun under a permit that allowed him to do so.

Ranson Police Chief Bill Roper, who appeared obviously tense, stood up when several gun rights advocates - one of them armed - approached council members to speak.

In an exchange with gun rights advocate Ian Branson of Vienna, Va., Roper said situations have arisen in which officials such as city managers have been shot in public areas.

Branson said not everyone who carries a gun is a criminal.

Roper he had no idea who in the group might have been dangerous.

"That's why I'm standing up," Roper said.

Roper said after the meeting that he thinks the gun rights advocates went too far by carrying guns.

"What protection do you need in a government process?" Roper asked.

Under West Virginia law, anyone can carry a gun if it is exposed, Roper said. Concealed weapons can be carried, but officials must approve of permits to have them.

Council members considered banning people from bringing guns to city recreation areas after someone recently brought a gun to the Charles C. Marcus Field behind The Marketplace at Potomac Towne Center along the Charles Town Bypass.

Although the man had a permit to carry the gun, state law allows the city to pass a law prohibiting guns to be brought to public facilities, Mayor David Hamill said.

City officials were concerned about the safety of people, particularly children, at public facilities, councilman Duke Pierson said.

Word spread among gun rights advocate groups about Ranson's proposal and at least a dozen gun rights advocates showed up at Tuesday's meeting.

Jim Mullins, president of the West Virginia Citizens Defense League, said during the meeting that he faxed a letter to city officials expressing his concern about the proposed law.

Gun rights advocates believe in the right to protect themselves with firearms and that extends to public areas, especially since taxpayers own those facilities, said Mullins, who was carrying a concealed weapon.

Mullins, of Morgantown, W.Va., thanked council members and Hamill for dropping consideration of the law. Also attending the meeting was Pete Morgan of Charleston, W.Va., who is the vice president of the West Virginia Citizens Defense League.

Mullins said after the meeting that he had a permit to carry the concealed weapon he had.

Hamill said city officials did not realize the potential impact of the law, and that they lacked sensitivity to the issue.

Roper said he thinks the issue still needs to be examined.

Lyle Seigel of Bunker Hill, W.Va., told council members their proposed law was a "bad ordinance."

"I have a (gun) permit and I keep that up to date," said Seigel, a member of the National Rifle Association.

In response to Roper's criticism that the gun rights advocates went too far in bringing guns to the council meeting, Branson said after the meeting that those doing so only were demonstrating how it is a right in the United States.

"We're trying to demystify the practice," said Branson, who had an exposed handgun tucked in his waistband.

Branson said a community in another part of the country passed a law similar to the one that Ranson was considering. Then during a meeting in that community, a man came to a town meeting, shot a bailiff, then started shooting town officials.

"Gun bans don't stop criminals," Branson said. "They don't care about them."

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<p>From: i4hunting Thu 10 Jul 2008 10:56:58 PM EDT</p>	<p>I'd like to take a moment to say "Thank You" to the Mayor, and City Council of Ranson, WV. Your retraction to the Gun Ban Ordinance was most correct. I read that Chief Roper still feels the need for further examination. 1st I would suggest checking on the excellent track record those whom CCW across the state. 2nd would be to investigate actual cases of WV-CCW use. 3rd Keep touch with WVCDL. Personal thanks to Councilman Pierson a former work supervisor of mine. Thank God Duke your in a position to help steer that city in the right ways. The law is designed to protect children where ever they may be. The folks carrying under WV-CCW are very good people Duke, as those states whom we have repocracy with. You should check into it for yourself.</p>
<p>From: Hughmungus Tue 08 Jul 2008 05:40:27 AM EDT</p>	<p>"What protection do you need in a government process?" Roper asked. In an exchange with gun rights advocate Ian Branson of Vienna, Va., Roper said situations have arisen in which officials such as city managers have been shot in public areas. Roper he had no idea who in the group might have been dangerous. Boy, I give up Chief. What protection do you need? Wait a second, why are police officers present at city council meetings? If there's no need for protection, why are they armed? If the Chief felt as though he needed to stand up because he had "no idea who in the group might have been dangerous", then he admits that there is a possibility of some sort of danger existing, which pretty much answers his own question. Right?</p>
<p>From: PavePusher Wed 09 Jul 2008 05:38:18 AM EDT</p>	<p>Quote: "Roper said after the meeting that he thinks the gun rights advocates went too far by carrying guns. "What protection do you need in a government process?" Roper asked." Chief Roper: Tens of thousands of American Indians can no longer answer your question. 1.5 million Armenian Turks can no longer answer your question. 6 Million residents of Central Europe can no longer answer your question. 20-30 million Russians can no longer answer your question. 20-40 million Chinese can no longer answer your question. 1-2 million Cambodians can no longer answer your question. 1 million Rwandans can no longer answer your question. Thousands of Serbs, Croats and Albanians can no longer answer your question. Chief Roper, who would you like to answer your question?</p>

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